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THE FOURTH MESSAGE

OF

HENRY M. DOREMUS

MAYOR

Presented to the Common Council of the City of Newark, New Jersey January 5, 1906

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MAYOR HENRY M. DOREMUS

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THE FOURTH MESSAGE OF HENRY M. DOREMUS

MAYOR

PRESENTED TO THE COMMON COUNCIL
OF THE CITY OF NEWARK,
NEW JERSEY. Mayor

JANUARY FIFTH, NINETEEN HUNDRED AND SIX

NEWARK, N. J.
C. WOLBER COMPANY, PRINTERS, 26 CAMPBELL STREET
1906

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MAYOR'S MESSAGE.

NEWARK, N. J., January 5, 1906.

To the Honorable
The Common Council
Newark, N. J.

GENTLEMEN:

I have the honor of again communicating with you in this, my fourth annual message. I desire to congratulate you upon the fact that into your care and keeping has been entrusted the welfare of nearly three hundred thousand human beings who look to you for the careful and conscientious administration of their affairs. The conditions which confront you may well cause you to feel proud, individually, of your membership in the Common Council.

Newark has the distinction of being in the very best financial condition of any city in the East. This statement is proven as fact by the sale of bonds less than four months ago at a greater premium than that realized by New York, Philadelphia, Boston or any other city, and by the fact that we are becoming our own bankers to a large extent by borrowing on temporary bonds from the funds held by the city's Sinking Fund Commissioners.

Newark is listed among the most healthful cities of the United States, ranking fifth or sixth in the matter of low death rate. Steadily our figures have been lowered and I am informed that the rate for the year just ended is considerably less than it has ever been before.

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In the matter of education Newark will soon be a model in point of facilities, buildings, enrollment and attendance. An expenditure of more than two million dollars in 1905 is an evidence of earnest desire and endeavor on the part of the educational and financial officers of the city to help the children.

In view of these statements, which might be added to by the customary and annual recapitulation of the many improvements of which we speak with so much civic pride, I desire to call your attention to several matters which may be considered by you during the course of the current year.

Some of the suggestions here made may not be taken up immediately but if only the seed for future good be sown I shall rest content.

PUBLIC UTILITIES.

Having been elected Mayor of the City of Newark to serve its people to the best of my ability, I stand ready to co-operate with them in their unmistakable demand for the granting of such franchises only as are limited to a term of years.

The benefits of rapid transit may have in a measure compensated citizens for privileges granted many years ago, but the desire of capitalists to invest in street car enterprises and the competition engendered by their rapid growth have combined to change conditions, and franchises and privileges which were given away to the pioneers of rapid transit facilities may now be disposed of more profitably. Ranking in importance with questions as to the value of franchises, is the subject of municipal ownership of public utilities. My experience abroad in visiting many cities which control public necessities and conveniences, prevents me at this time

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from advocating wholesale or general municipal ownership. There is no doubt in my mind that we have not yet reached that stage of our civilization when such general ownership would be wise. Many of our sister cities are experimenting in these fields. Newark itself was one of the first of American cities to take up the idea at a time when public sentiment was even less pronounced than now. I refer to the municipal ownership of our water supply and am free to say that I have not yet heard any adverse criticism of the fact that the city owns and controls absolutely one of the finest pure water systems in all the United States.

On the other hand, there seems no reason for the municipal ownership of, for instance, the telephone system. The fact that there are many conflicting telephone contracts with the various departments of the city government is no argument in favor of municipal ownership. This condition is merely a matter for proper regulation and I commend to the new City Hall Commissioners a study of this question with the view of making one general contract for the new building on terms as advantageous for the city as possible. Each department may thereafter accept these rates and pay its proportionate share of an extension contract.

I believe that where a municipality expends a large amount of money for such public necessities as street lighting, it is most important for officials representing the city to consider deeply how such lighting may be secured at the lowest possible cost. Much may be said in favor of municipal ownership of public lighting facilities and much may be said and written in opposition and all the arguments, perhaps, may have a certain bearing on the subject. In the absence of definite and positive information, however, as to the exact conditions

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under which municipalities may secure artificial light, I am led to say frankly that we should proceed with great care. I commend this entire subject to the most careful study of the Board of Street and Water Commissioners, who have already shown their appreciation of its importance.

PASSAIC POLLUTION.

During the year I have been especially interested in the great problem of Passaic River Purification. A number of conferences have been held in Newark by representatives of all the municipalities in the Passaic Valley District and a majority of these communities are now ready to unite on some central plan for the relief of existing conditions. His Excellency, the Governor, has become interested, the Board of Trade has persistently advocated the purification of our once beautiful river and other agencies have been at work with such good results that I firmly believe we are now on the eve of the beginning of this important improvement. The constant and watchful consideration of intelligent men is needed and I beg leave to suggest that a committee of five members of your honorable body be appointed as a special committee to serve during the year. Its members could take up the subject and assist in the passage of such laws as may be needed at this time. Ultimately the Common Council will be called upon to provide funds for Newark's share of the expense of this great work, and I think it wise that you should be kept constantly in touch with this most important subject through such a committee of your members as I have suggested.

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TECHNICAL TRAINING.

I have given the matter of technical training the most careful thought and consideration and have been led to favor the extension of manual and technical studies. But I can not conscientiously recommend the expenditure of large sums of money in this direction until our educational authorities present a statement showing that they can accommodate in the primary and grammar grades every child of school age. I appreciate the fact that much may be said in favor of technical educational facilities which may develop into an artisans' college or some school of learning that may make Newark famous as an educational centre. I appreciate the fact that we are forcing too many of our children into the already over-crowded professions and neglecting, in a degree, the children who are best fitted for the field of skilled labor where artisans are always in demand and where wages are constantly increasing. But our greatest need at this writing is ample facilities for the elementary education of every child of school age. I am pleading in the interests of the unfortunate children who can not now be accommodated except in half-day classes.

SHADE TREES.

Property owners who have been assessed for the planting of trees in front of their premises have complained bitterly of what they refer to as the injustice of the Shade Tree Commission. Whether these complaints are based on fact or sentiment is not now the question, but I venture to say that the Commissioners were well within their rights.

I favor the return to property owners of all taxes imposed upon them for shade trees during the year just

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passed because I am convinced that any system of local taxation or assessment is subject to criticism. Had sewers, street pavements and like improvements been paid for by levies made in the general tax account when these improvements were first begun instead of by local assessment on property benefited, Newark and Newark officials would have been saved the annoyance of hundreds of law suits brought by dissatisfied land owners and would have found it unnecessary to return the large sums which the Courts have frequently held had been wrongly assessed. Legislation may be necessary to accomplish the result desired; if so, I call the attention of your Legislative Committee thereto.

I believe it to be a much wiser policy to give the Shade Tree Commission an annual appropriation to be expended in beautifying the city without direct charge to individual property owners.

THE POLICE DEPARTMENT.

Perhaps no department of the city government has been criticised more than the Police Department. In the very nature of things no department is more apt to be censured. But this criticism has not always been just. Unfortunately the acts of individual men in uniform have been detrimental to the entire force. I believe the Commissioners are thoroughly in earnest in their labors and I believe their efforts are beginning to show results. The Board is certainly entitled to the co-operation of all right-minded citizens. These statements are made in a spirit of fairness and justice, not only to the Commissioners but to the four hundred and odd men who have been wearing the uniform of the department with great credit to themselves and their superior officers.

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A TWELFTH WARD PARK.

The crowded conditions and the constantly increasing number of tenements in certain sections of the city renders it advisable for us to devise ways and means for the protection of children who are now growing up in the streets, the gutters and sidewalks. The efforts of public-spirited residents of the Twelfth Ward to remedy these conditions and to secure for the children of their neighborhood the benefits of a public park and breathing space where they may romp at will, are to be commended. The attention of the Essex County Park Commissioners is called to conditions which exist in the Twelfth Ward, and they are respectfully urged to consider favorably the request thus made in behalf of the children.

STREET NOISES.

I can not understand the failure of officials in neglecting oft-repeated suggestions that some limit be placed upon street noises. I have been told that new laws must be enacted before Newark can secure relief. If East Orange and other New Jersey municipalities find existing laws ample for their own protection, I can not understand why additional laws are needed for Newark. I respectfully commend this subject to the Board of Health.

OUTINGS FOR CHILDREN.

Your Committee on Public Outings for Children is entitled to a word or two of praise in any review of the good accomplished during the year. Marked as was the change from one day excursions to week's outings

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none will doubt the wisdom of the reform. I understand that nearly nine hundred children were given the benefit of an outing of one or two weeks' duration in Morris County, and echoes of the Summer's work have reached me from time to time in expressions of grateful appreciation of the great good done.

THE CITY ALMSHOUSE.

For years I have been of the opinion that our City Almshouse is not as well located as might be desirable. In the extreme southern section of the city inmates of this institution find no influences to ward off depression and the loss of hope and ambition which characterizes their old age and infirmity. I have often thought that a change to the bracing air of the country and to the restful quiet of some out of the way spot would be of material benefit to these unfortunates. The opportunity to make such a change is now afforded. The Trustees of the Newark City Home, who have discovered that the methods of influencing incorrigible girls have undergone radical changes and improvements in the direction of individual rather than class instruction and probation, have now on their hands an empty building formerly used as a girls' cottage. This vacant building with slight alterations would be a most desirable home for the unfortunate people now in the Almshouse. Located as it is on one of the highest points in all Essex County, this Verona building is surrounded by large tracts of vacant land which could be used by the old people for rest and recreation.

CLEAN STREETS.

The importance of keeping our streets clean can not be over-estimated. The money appropriated to the Department of Streets and Highways, has, in my

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judgment, been inadequate to meet the demands of the situation, but for these appropriations no one may be justly blamed, every effort being made by the city's financial officers to make appropriations show proper returns, a practise which leads naturally to a desire to pare down appropriations whose permanent results are not tangible. A change in the methods of handling laborers during the last few months has resulted in the accomplishment of a greater amount of work for a given sum than was ever before possible. In former years all the street cleaning laborers were started from the centre of the city and considerable time was lost in reaching the streets designated for cleaning. The district system, so universally in vogue in many European cities, is now being tried here. The results have been excellent. Men for the Eastern section of the city now report at the Walnut street bath house and men for the Western section of the city report at Sixteenth avenue and Bergen street. In good time, I am assured, the system will be extended.

I cite this instance merely to present to the various departments of the city government a truth worth remembering, viz.: that an appropriation may often cover more ground than is at first thought possible.

CIVIL SERVICE.

Members of the Boards of Police and Fire Commissioners assure me that the Civil Service regulations, under which recent appointments have been made, have been eminently satisfactory. Great care was exercised in the drafting of the rules and regulations governing the examination of applicants and the resultant list of eligibles proved the wisdom of the first Civil Service

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Commissioners who performed their public duty in a manner worthy the highest commendation.

The extension of Civil Service regulations in other departments may be worth consideration, but I am not sufficiently convinced of the justice of the arguments in favor of Civil Service extension to make any strong recommendations at this time. Nor am I in favor of changing the Civil Service law put on the statute books at my recommendation last year. There is no urgent need for amendment, no need for haste. Neither am I convinced of the wisdom of an amendment to the law to make it mandatory on the part of Police and Fire Commissioners to base all promotions upon Civil Service tests. An applicant may pass a spendid examination and still be absolutely lacking in executive ability. Personal knowledge of his capabilities will permit better judgment on the part of Commissioners. It might not be amiss to say that if the members of these Boards find merit in Civil Service regulations regarding promotions there is no reason why they should not, of their own accord and voluntary act, frame certain rules and regulations and give all aspirants for promotion an opportunity of submitting to an examination. They could thus secure an eligible list from which promotions could be made. Such a proceeding would put an end to the political activity always engendered at the prospect of a vacancy.

FREAK ADVERTISING.

During the last few years the evil practises of freak advertisers have grown almost beyond control. That a man in costume not usually worn has no right to exhibit himself as a trained freak in the interests of some advertiser and by his action endanger the life and

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limb of pedestrians, no one will dispute. That an immense wagon with canvas top and sides concealing men and boys paid to beat drums and make other noises to attract attention is annoying, is self-evident. That strangers in our city should find our busiest corners reeking with flamboyant bill-boards, sends a chill of shame down the spine of every Newark-loving Newarker. All these advertising schemes are an injustice to individuals and an imposition on the public. Taxes are levied for the beautifying of streets, parks and public property generally and the bill-board and freak advertising novelties are an off-set to such taxation. I do not believe that bill-board advertising is any longer essential to business increase. In fact I am informed that the larger and more legitimate business men of Newark have practically discarded this form of advertising.

I am not in favor of permitting the continuance of this evil by merely exacting a license fee and thus condoning the harm done. Nor am I in favor of the enactment of any ordinance forbidding Newark merchants from advertising in any form that suits them best, remembering always that a nuisance or an infringement of the liberty of others may be proceeded against legally. My object in alluding to this subject is to appeal through you to the merchants of Newark to refrain from freak advertising and to appeal through you to property owners to refrain from granting locations for unsightly bill-boards.

THE NEW CITY HALL.

During the next few months the old City Hall building will be abandoned and the city departments will be removed to the handsome new building, which, with its splendid equipment, will soon be ready for occupancy.

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The various city departments will be brought together and a more efficient administration will be secured by the change.

In conclusion I bid you all bear in mind the great improvements made during the year which has just passed into history, that you may strive earnestly for the benefit of our constantly growing municipality, assuring our citizens of the continued prosperity which is always the fruit of good government.

Respectfully submitted,

Mayor.

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